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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001693

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SUBJECT: CRISIS IN THE CONGO: BELGIAN FM DEGUCHT'S MEETING  
WITH RWANDAN PRESIDENT KAGAME

REF: BRUSSELS 1680

Classified By: Acting Political Economic Counselor Richard Eason for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: On November 4 the Belgian MFA briefed European Union, Canadian, Japanese, South African, and U.S. Embassies on FM Karl De Gucht's November 1 meeting with Rwandan President Paul Kagame. After providing the meeting points, the MFA Africa team offered Belgian views on the situation and solutions for the Congo (DRC). The MFA expressed appreciation for the strong diplomatic effort made by the international community, including the EU, the African Union, and the United States, to reach out to Kigali. Belgium believes the diplomatic effort should continue, and supports a intervention by a European military force if necessary. Belgium's first C-130 flight left Kinshasa today carrying humanitarian supplies to Goma. There are signs that Belgian-Congolese relations are improving. Belgium will continue to focus the international community's attention on the Congo. End Summary.

Points Made by Minister De Gucht  
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¶2. (C) The MFA described the De Gucht-Kagame meeting as detailed, lengthy, constructive and with a positive atmosphere. De Gucht said Kagame has attempted to communicate with Nkunda. He said that he had asked Rwanda to continue to exercise influence in the Eastern Congo and persuade Nkunda to respect the cease-fire. De Gucht stressed the importance of stability in the Eastern Congo for the region as a whole. Both De Gucht and Kagame agreed that the main source of peace and stability is the Congolese authorities. De Gucht argued for a strengthening of MONUC's mandate due to the limitations of the Congolese army. Kagame agreed. De Gucht also pointed out that neighboring countries and MONUC could play a role in limiting the illegal exploitation of minerals that feeds the chaos in the DRC. Finally, the Minister brought up the return of foreign armed groups (FLDR) to Rwanda. This led to a discussion of the genocidaire question, a concern of the DRC. According to the MFA, about 120 genocidaires are targeted, but as many as 6,000 could be subject to some sanction.

Where Belgium Stands  
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¶3. (C) Belgium remains concerned with the humanitarian problem, and its first Kinshasa-Eastern Congo C-130 flight arrived in Goma today. The GoB envisions at least eight flights carrying items from Belgian strategic stocks. After that, the GoB is open to providing transport for outside humanitarian assistance. Belgium is thankful for the international diplomatic efforts of the past few days, and believes they should continue. In De Gucht's opinion, the message should be that both governments in Kinshasa and Kigali have responsibilities.

¶4. (C) Belgium will continue its efforts to diminish tensions on the ground. De Gucht supports expanding and strengthening the MONUC mandate, as suggested by Alan Doss. MONUC should have more autonomy to act without Congolese troops to target the FLDR, CNDP and Congolese army bands outside of government control. MONUC should also be authorized to take control of the exploitation of minerals. The GoB believes that monitoring and controlling the mines could end the conflict sooner. The MFA confirmed Belgian support for a European military option and underscored Belgium's willingness to contribute troops. They noted that the idea has yet to mature in European circles, but stressed the need for Europe to be ready if diplomacy should fail. (Note: Belgium would only contribute to a EU, not/repeat not a UN force. End Note.)

#### Diplomatic Effort and Ground Situation

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¶5. (C) On the diplomatic front, the MFA officials praised the efforts of the U.K., France, and the U.S., including A/S Frazier's visit. They noted that UNSYG has appointed a Special Envoy, as has the African Union -- Jean Ping. Belgian EU Commissioner Louis Michel said both Kabila and Kagame would go to a Nairobi summit where several African leaders could gather, but they seem hesitant to agree to a bilateral meeting. The MFA said any such meeting would probably be arranged by the Great Lakes Union.

¶6. (C) In Belgian analysis, a lot is happening as a result of diplomatic efforts. Foreign Ministers of Rwanda and the DRC have met. The Belgians noted a lighter tone in public statements. Rwanda's FM has referred to the FLDR as a problem, in contrast to previous discussions, where only the CNDP was singled out.

¶7. (C) With a very wry tone, the MFA briefers said there were signs of a possible thaw in Belgium-Congo relations. They noted that MFA officials met with the Congolese during the Francophone Summit in Montreal. President Kabila recently called to speak to FM Leterme, and both sides agreed it was time to "turn a page." The MFA referred to a road map they have developed for improvement, which would guide them in the right direction, but at an unknown speed.

#### Comment

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¶8. (C) Belgium remains engaged in the Congo, and is working hard to maintain what it sees as a beneficial diplomatic offensive to stop the current humanitarian crisis. The GoB is thankful friends and allies have made an effort to reach out to Rwandan President Kagame, who can help in the near term. In the long run, they believe the Congolese government needs to accept responsibility for what is going on 2,000 kilometers from its capital. They noted that Belgian-Congolese relations were improving and said they would work to keep the Congolese government engaged in the region. The Belgians intend to continue rallying the international community. One contact noted that though there were ten times as many people affected by crisis in Eastern Congo as by Darfur, they lack a George Clooney to focus the world's attention.